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ABSTRACT

Anticipation of negative consequences and sex role have both been found to contribute to fear of success (FOS). Specifically, research has found that expressive personalities (feminine) exhibit high FOS while instrumental personalities (masculine) exhibit low FOS. To demonstrate that values, especially those associated with sex roles, determine definitions of success and therefore explain the relationship between high FOS and expressive personality traits, a new scale, the Definitions of Success Scale (DOSS), was devised. The scale employs four definitions of success, two traditional (business, academic) and two nontraditional (social, family). Female high school students (N=160) completed the DOSS, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), and the Zuckerman FOS scale. Analyses of results showed that expressive personalities chose nontraditional values and exhibited high FOS. The findings suggest that the bias of the FOS scale is responsible for FOS scores. (The DOSS is appended). (BL)

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FEAR OF SUCCESS, SEX-ROLE ORIENTATION, AND DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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FEAR OF SUCCESS, SEX-ROLES AND DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY.

Fear of Success (FOS) has been defined as, "Inhibition tendency against achievement-directed behavior stemming from the negative consequences anticipated for success," (Tresemer, 1976). This most recent definition of FOS asserts that the underlying force behind FOS is an actual fear of obtaining a "successful" position in life. This may not always be the case. Research by Silverman (1980) and Johnston (1980) both indicate that sex-role may be a major determiner of FOS, specifically that expressive personalities (feminine) may exhibit high FOS while instrumental personalities (masculine) may exhibit low FOS. More over, there is the possibility that exhibitors of high FOS possess different priorities and values than those who exhibit low FOS. The definitions of success which have been employed in FOS literature reflect not so much objective reality as they reflect values. The purpose of the following study is to demonstrate that values, especially those associated with sex-roles, determine definitions of success, and therefore explain the relationship between expressive personality traits and high FOS.

In order to test this hypothesis, a new scale assessing preferred definitions of success has been devised, The Definitions of Success Scale (DOSS). The scale employs four definitions of success, two seen as traditional, (Business and Academic) and two seen as non-traditional, (Social and Family). These four definitions are pitted against each other in a Likert-type scale to create four sub-scales. Analysis of the scale rendered alphas

of .60, .57, .64, .72 for Business, Academic, Social and Family sub-scales respectively.

160 female Jr. and Sr. high school students served as subjects for the final study. The subjects were asked to complete two other scales in addition to the DOSS: The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Zuckerman FOS Scale.

It was predicted that expressive personalities would choose definitions contrary to the assumed orientations, traditional definitions, of success as examplified in the FOS scales. Instrumental personalities, on the other hand, would exhibit low FOS and define success with the same traditional orientations as seen in the FOS scales.

The data were analyzed by means of a multiple regression. The hypothesis that expressive personalities would choose non-traditional orientations and exhibit HFOS was found to be significant at the .05 level indicating that the bias of the FOS scale is responsible for FOS scores.

ABSTRACT

This study relates sex-role orientation, fear of success (FOS) and definitions of success to indicate that a bias in the FOS scale exists. It is this bias that is responsible for FOS scores rather than subjects possessing a fear of success. Subjects were 160 female juniors and seniors from four local high schools. The sex-role orientation of the subjects was determined by the Bem Sex Role Inventory, while fear of success was determined by the Zuckerman Fear of Success Scale. The definitions of success were determined by a newly-generated scale, the Definitions of Success Scale. The ideology and analysis of this new scale are also discussed. The design of this study is a 2 x 4 with the one dependent variable being the fear of success score. The results indicate that the bias of the FOS scale is responsible for HFOS scores.

At its origination, Fear of Success (FOS) was seen as a strictly female phenomenon. FOS was defined as, "being afraid of social rejection and loss of femininity if [one] become[s] highly successful" (Horner, 1972). Horner probably was not far from the truth since women actually do suffer rejection for deviating from their sex roles (Faranda, 1981; Rawles, 1981). The assumption, however, is that being successful is also deviating from the female sex role. If this were indeed the case, then FOS should be limited to females. The data do not support this. As Tresemer (1976) states, "The lack of gender difference of FOS responses... suggest[s] that FOS means something other than a response to gender role--inappropriate achievement." In addition, other research has shown that sex-role conflict in the females' jobs is not a predictor of FOS (Silverman, 1981).

Since sex-role conflict in the job and the loss of femininity can now be ruled out, the question becomes, "Why do some females exhibit high FOS (HFOS) while others remain relatively low (LFOS) on such measures?" Past research on FOS reports that, "There appear to be certain personality characteristics that tend to affect an individual's 'fear of success'" (Koenigsdorf, 1981). It has been shown, also, that HFOSers tend to describe themselves in more feminine terms than do LFOSers (Goldstein, 1982; Silverman, 1981). Still other research reports that professional females tend to be more masculine than traditionally-employed females (traditional being in agreement with the feminine sex role) (Barclay, 1981). Johnston (1981) did a similar study indicating that professional

women exhibited LFOS and more masculine characteristics than did homemakers who exhibited HFOS. Horner (1969) also indicates a conjunctive between FOS and sex-role standards by stating that they are both stable personality characteristics and acquired early in life (Makosky, 1976).

Now the question becomes, "What is it about possessing feminine characteristics that causes these women to fear success?" Possibly it may be the way they view or define success. As Simmons-Kiefer (1982) states, "As children, there are specific cultural features which differentiate their social pattern, and, as adults, due to early socialization, success and life goals are viewed from differing realities." If males and females (masculines and feminines) do have different definitions of success, then they are overlooked in FOS research thus far. FOS research is completely lacking a definition of what success actually is. The scales, however, do assume that we all share the same definition; that is, power, to be on top, obtain independent social status, etc. These are in agreement with "success" as defined in American literature on success and "The American Dream" (Ellisworth, 1925; Olneck and Crouse, 1978; Weiss, 1969). In addition, the characteristics used to describe a successful person are masculine (Williams, 1977).

Not only has it been shown that HFOSers lack these masculine characteristics, as mentioned in the research above, but also that they lack an interest in these "American Dream" or "traditional" definitions of success. Zuckerman and Allison (1976) report that as FOS increases, importance of "success" decreases. It has been shown, also, that women motivated toward high achievement re-define the words "success" and "failure" (McClelland, 1975). The behaviors

of females with FOS also support the idea that FOSers have different values in that they have more children than LFOSers (Tresemer, 1976) and can compete when they see competition as appropriate (Makosky, 1976). It may just be that they see competition appropriate less often than a LFOSer. The research also indicates that HFOSers tend to be more social-minded than LFOSers (Richardson, 1981).

Going along with the idea of a different value system, or a different idea of what success is, the Definitions of Success Scale (DOSS) was developed to determine if separate definitions of success did exist. This scale consists of four six-item sub-scales. A one-to-seven scaling was used; the number one being "Totally Disagree" and number seven being "Totally agree." Two of the four sub-scales, Academic and Business, are in accordance with the traditional definition of success as defined in literature on American success (Ellisworth, 1925; Olneck and Crouse, 1978; Weiss, 1969; Williams, 1977). The remaining two sub-scales, Family and Social, are drawn from trends discussed in past FOS research (Barclay, 1981; Johnston, 1981. Koenigsdorf, 1981; Makosky, 1976; Richardson, 1981; Silverman, 1981; Tresemer, 1976).

In order to determine that different definitions of success do lead to the label of FOS, three scales will be implemented: The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974; 1976); the Zuckerman Fear of Success Scale (ZFOSS) (Zuckerman and Allison, 1976); and the Definitions of Success Scale (DOSS). It is predicted that when the two non-traditional definitions of success, Family and Social, are exhibited in conjunction with femininity, as determined by the BSRI, this individual will receive the label of a FOSer, indicating that

a fear of success does not actually exist but, rather, what does exist are separate definitions of what it is to be a success. In addition, it is predicted that when the two traditional definitions of success, Academic and Business, are exhibited in conjunction with masculinity this individual will receive a LFOS score on the ZFOSS.

METHOD

Subjects. The subjects for this study were 160 junior and senior females from four local high schools. Criterion was set at completion of all scales. There was reason to believe that incomplete data was due to a substantially weaker vocabulary than required to understand the scales.

Instruments. The instruments used were three paper-and-pencil scales: the short form of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), the Zuckerman Fear of Success Scale (ZFOSS), and the Definition of Success Scale (DOSS).

The BSRI in its short form contains ten items (adjectives or phrases) which were judged to be socially desirable for a man. These create the masculine (or instrumental) sub-scale. There are also ten items which reflect socially desirable characteristics for women. These comprise the feminine (or expressive) sub-scale. Ten neutral fillers are also included in this scale (Bem, 1974; 1976; Johnson, unpublished). The subject is to use a seven-point scale, number one being "Never true," number seven being "Always true," to determine which items hold true for them.

The ZFOSS consists of 27 statements which the subject is to rate on a scale from one to seven, number one being "Totally

disagree" and number seven being "Totally agree." Eleven of these statements indicate LFOS while the remaining 16 indicate HFOS. The scale has demonstrated reliability and predictive validity (Orlasky, 1979; Sadd, et al, 1978; Zuckerman and Allison, 1976).

The DOSS consists of 24 seven-point agree-disagree statements. Two internal validity runs were made. The first run used 177 male and female Introductory Psychology students from UNM. The items obtaining the best alphas possible were then used, in addition to newly-generated statements, to create the scale for the second run. This run used 241 male and female students from Introductory Psychology and Social Psychology classes from UNM. The items were once again chosen to obtain the optimal alpha while still maintaining six items per subscale. The final alphas achieved were:

Business - .592
Academic - .564
Social - .635
Family - .716

Procedure. Since the experiment consisted of only pencil-and-paper scales, the scales were administered to groups of nine to fifteen females rather than isolated individuals. The three scales were placed in a manila envelope in random order, and given to the subjects in random order. On the envelope were instructions to fill out the scales in the order they were placed in the envelope and not to look at the other scales ahead of time nor to return to completed scales. Also, the subjects were encouraged orally to work on their own and to

ask questions concerning unclear instructions and unfamiliar words or phrases. A questionnaire to gather basic information (desired education level, ethnic background, age, etc.) about the subject was enclosed also. After completion, the scales and questionnaire were placed back in the envelope by the subject and collected by the experiemnter. Following this, subjects were debriefed.

RESULTS

The design of this study is a 2 x 4 (BSRI and DOSS) with the one dependent variable being the ZFOSS score. A multiple regression was done to determine if any one predictor variable explained more of the variance. No significant main effects were found. Another regression was done using three two-way and two three-way interactions in addition to the main effects. Only one possibly significant finding resulted; the three-way interaction between social and family orientations and femininity. A third regression was then done to heighten the significance of the three-way. This included the three-way, the three permutations of the included two-ways and the main effects. This analysis rendered the social, family and feminine interaction as a significant positive predictor of FOS at the .05 level (F=5.129).

A scatter plot of the raw data using quadrants was then done by hand to determine the relationship within the interaction. Family and social variables were segregated to serve as the discrete variables while femininity and fear of success remain continuous. This scatter plot indicated that as family and social definitions increased in value so did femininity and FOS.

DISCUSSION

The positive relationship between family and social definitions of success and femininity as a significant predictor of fear of success indicates that these females do have values that differ from the traditional definitions that are exhibited in the Fear of Success Scale. It is therefore possible that females with these characteristics and definitions do not actually fear the traditional goals but rather prefer other goals. In addition, the lack of a main effect for femininity indicates that it is not femininity per se that predicts HFOS. The non-traditional definitions in conjunction with femininity are the crucial factor.

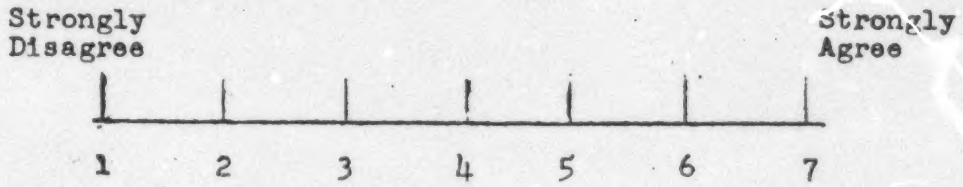
The failure to obtain a significant three-way interaction between masculine, academic, and business as a predictor of LFOS has two possible explanations. One is that these three variables are not necessary for LFOS but rather that the lack of high femininity, social and family scores renders a low FOS score. Another possibility lies within a weakness of the DOSS. While social and family sub-scales obtained satisfactory internal validity, academic and business sub-scales were not as strong.

Headen (1981) states that the expected goal attainment rather than success alone triggers the response. For this reason, it was felt high school juniors and seniors would serve as an adequate population, along with ensuring HFOSers were still in the population, unlike college. But since both this study and the validation of the DOSS were executed with the use of students, both need to be tested outside the academic sphere. In further studies males should be included also, to enable the gathering of more evidence in the gender difference debate.

(DOSS)

PERSONAL ATTITUDES INVENTORY

This is a measure of personal attitudes. On the following sheets you will find a number of statements. Using the seven-point scale below, indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the statements. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the statements. If you are unsure about an answer, please make your best guess and do not leave any item unanswered.



Example:

I would rather go to a friend's birthday party than go to a friend's wedding.

Write "1" if you think that all or almost all of the time you would prefer to go to the wedding.

Write "2" if you think that most of the time you would prefer to go to the wedding.

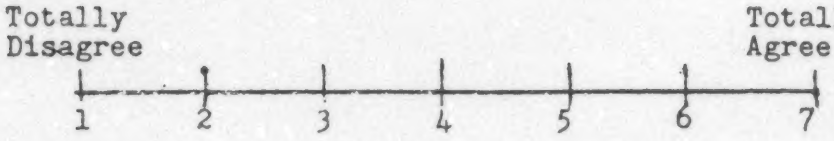
Write "3" if you think that some of the time you would prefer to go to the wedding.

Write "4" if you would like to go to the party and the wedding equally as much.

Write "5" if you think that some of the time you would prefer to go to the party.

Write "6" if you think that most of the time you would prefer to go to the party.

Write "7" if you think that all or almost all of the time you would prefer to go to the party.



Place answer here

1. If I had a day to do as I pleased, I would rather do some volunteer work than get ahead in my job. . _____

2. Having friends makes me happier than having money. _____

3. If I found out a job promotion would cost me a friendship, I would take the promotion just the same _____

4. In order to maintain a high rank in class, it is okay to neglect friends during those periods of time when I need to study . . . . . _____

5. It is more important to me to have the approval of my family than the approval of my friends. . . . . _____

6. It is more important to me that I have money than to be the best at scholastic activities. . . . . _____

7. I take more pride in my own accomplishments than in those of a close friend . . . . . _____

8. If a friend and I both had our own assignments due the next day and my friend wanted me to spend most of that night helping him (her), I would politely turn the friend down . . . . . _____

9. If offered two jobs, I would take the job with the higher pay, even if it meant working with less friendly associates. . . . . _____

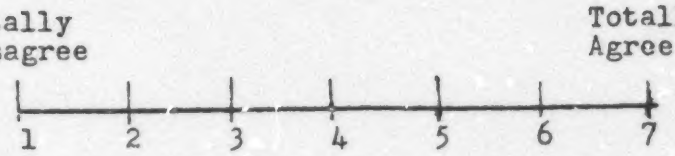
10. My friends come before my career . . . . . _____

11. I value my time with my family more than the times with my friends. . . . . _____

12. There is no such thing as spending too much time with family, even if it means personal goals will go unobtained. . . . . _____

13. If given my choice between two work groups, I would pick the group that would assure me the best results in accomplishing the task rather than the group containing my friends. . . . . _____

14. Spending most of my time in obtaining academic recognition (for example, graduating with honors) is more important than spending time with my family _____



Place answer here

15. I take more pride in compliments on my friendliness than compliments on my job . . . . . _____

16. I would not take a job that would cripple my social life . . . . . _____

17. To be good at a chosen career, a person must spend more time on it than anything else . . . . . _____

18. If getting good grades conflicted with my job, I would willingly let my grades slip a little. . . . _____

19. I am willing to neglect my friends to perfect a talent of mine . . . . . _____

20. The happiness of my family is more important to me than the happiness of my friends. . . . . _____

21. Bringing money home for the family is more important than spending time with the family . . . _____

22. The family makes the most important contribution to a person's personality. . . . . _____

23. Being accepted by the community is more important to me than having a high-paying job. . . . . _____

24. A person should be willing to sacrifice anything, no matter how large or small, for the family . . . _____

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